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WORDS MATTER! MANNAN WANI WRITES AN OPEN LETTER

## Words Matter! Mannan Wani writes an open letter



Mannan Wani

Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you send him to the cemetery. – Malcolm X

Occupation is not easy to understand, it's a very complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The

decade's long bloody conflict has turned Kashmir into one of the most politically mature nations of the world.

With time we all have somewhat understood the complex functioning, structure, and machinery of occupation. India as a colonial state is slowly but steadily failing in justifying its colonial rule to the people of Kashmir.

But, occupation is like cancer thus, we as a nation and community have to evolve and update ourselves of the new military, mental and diplomatic tactics of India as a colonial state.

You might be wondering why I, one who choose the gun over pen, decided to write. There are a few things that I believe made it hard for me to be silent;

1: Collaborators nowadays are obfuscating facts to justify occupation and oppression while playing with emotions of gullible masses, human rights defenders are turning into business monsters and are making conflict a business by featuring the pain of oppressed, activism is guided and directed from Delhi studios.

2: From print media to electronic media, everyone from oppressors to oppressed has chosen to castigate us, our ways and methodology, our ideology and thought-process by simply demonizing us.

Thirdly, when people who were forced to give up gun to propagate 'peaceful ways of resistance' try to justify our methods of resistance by their own understanding and logic but actually disown us and our ideology and lastly when a former top cop turned human rights defender who worthlessly tried to crush genuine aspirations of people during his tenure tries to preach humanity and moderate-ism through half-hearted and illogical arguments.

One has but to respond. Thus, it becomes imperative for a person like me (who neither has resources nor the luxuries like the people I tried to relate above) who has already chosen the gun over pen, to reply back in the same language and to present our point of view.

And I believe it's necessary that some insider also puts his point of view to get the facts straight.

Not going into the long history of the occupation which I believe everyone among us is well aware of its roots, causes, and ramifications.

The modern era of resistance started after the mass upsurge of 2008. Since then the methods of resistance have drastically and positively changed.

With the change in methods of resistance the tactics of oppression & suppression also evolved. India has realized it very well that they no longer can justify their illegal occupation or keep the Kashmiri nation silent under the jackboots of slavery.

So, they are willfully trying to change the historical and political realities of Kashmir. Day in and day out, new discourses are being circulated in media through various individuals and agencies.

India is very cleverly trying to confuse the people of Kashmir by manufacturing the narratives suiting to justify their military presence and oppressive measures used to contain the populace of J&K.

Certain individuals are assigned powerful and resourceful positions and then made to befool the people by bringing new discourses (irrelevant) and trying to make the old and actual ones seem out-dated and irrelevant.

One day we see some bureaucrat writing 'India is the only rational choice Kashmiris have' and the other day a politician will question 'why militants feel dignity in death'. I will here try to deconstruct some of such vague arguments and expose the hypocrisy behind them.

'we are soldiers we don't fight to die but to win, we don't feel dignity in death but we do feel dignity in fighting (Indian) occupation, its military might, its oppression, its tyranny, its collaborators and most of all its ego and if/when we die while fighting all this, we do feel dignity in that death.' By 'we', I mean every Kashmiri and by 'Kashmiri' I mean every citizen of J&K, who is fighting the occupation in one or other way, not just the men with the gun.



A teacher (school, college or university) who teaches students honestly or a doctor who works day in and out to treat his patients humanely or a student protesting the atrocities of occupation honorably or a stone palter who throws stones on occupying forces while facing bullets in return, or a columnist who writes fearlessly or a Journalist who risks his life to report the truths from ground zero or a person who just talks about the occupation or a lawyer who fights legally in a court, or a government employee who is sincere in his duties or for that matter a policeman who performs his real duty of maintaining law and order (not terrorizing, killing, maiming, and torturing natives), we are all soldiers of resistance.

New identities and divisions are being created, to bifurcate the society and to create voids in resistance. Before 2016 mass upsurge was deliberately associated with city and towns and militancy was called the activity of some 'illiterate strayed village boys'.

Now protests are being associated with the 'south Kashmir villagers' who have no sense of economy. Although every now and then people have rejected these narratives by showing their mass support to resistance movement but still we need to be vigilant about how they try to disconnect people from each other using senseless discourses, sometimes on a sub-regional basis (North Vs South) and sometimes on the sectarian and ethnic basis.

There is a very strong campaign going on in media (both social media and electronic media) against the resistance of Kashmir.

Those who fight occupation are called fanatics, fundamentalists and their favorite word, terrorists. The people behind these campaigns are well aware of the facts but it's their job to befool people. The Indian NCERT textbook for 12th class political science students defines the terrorist as, "one who targets civilians indiscriminately to get their demands fulfilled".

By this definition, one can clearly understand who qualifies to be a terrorist since our course of action is known to one and all. Unlike India, we don't kill civilians (Kashmiris or Indian) and noncombatants (not part of occupation).

Those calling us terrorists should either change their textbooks or their rhetoric. The people of India are being taught that Kashmiri militants are brainwashed young boys who join militancy for 72 virgins and they believe dying like this is a shortcut for jannah.

There is no denying that Islam is our motivation and way of life and Islam indeed promises Jannah for fighting against every kind of oppression in whatever means one can.

But, as I mentioned above we are soldiers we join the war not to die and live in Jannah but to fight the enemy and defeat him.

No mujahid can ever claim Jannah even if he sacrifices everything, Jannah is the domain of Allah and that will be decided on the Day of Judgment not just on the fact that you died in a war, but the entry in Jannah has a million criteria.

Also, we do not claim that Islam exclusively belongs to us only but it is true also those oppressors have a long history of manipulating people in the name of religion. They will always choose a specific part of Islam, misinterpret it and try to legitimize their occupation.

It's often been argued that we are fighting a lost war. Apologists of occupation flaunt the military might of India, its missile technology, and its huge army; comparisons are being made between 200 young boys with AK47 and the one million army men with the latest weaponry.

The latest military history of the world, whether its US in Vietnam, USSR in Afghanistan or NATO in Afghanistan, teaches us those huge armies and latest weapons do not win the wars.

If the 200 boys with rusty AK47 have no comparison with the Indian army, why does India need a million troopers and a budget of billions to fight these militants? Why does the brave army of India use tanks and even gunship helicopters to fight a couple of untrained young boys who are already surrounded by thousands of their men? Why do these occupational forces hundreds in number have to blow up the houses in order to kill the single man with the gun? The answer to every such question is that India is already losing the war in Kashmir.

There was a time when the fight was between an armed militant and a thousand Indian troopers but now Indian army has to get through thousands of unarmed freedom fighters before getting the gunman.

The people who come to rescue the militants at encounter sites, unarmed, without caring about their lives give us an idea about the aspirations and emotions of the people. India might befool their own citizens or world community by calling militants as brainwashed Islamic terrorists but how can India justify that a whole nation fighting them are brainwashed.

India is in utter frustration and this is very visible every night on its news channels. Govt. of India hides its failures by running hate and venomous campaigns against us on media.

One can easily guess the level of their frustration; the teachers of colleges and universities in Kashmir are spied by govt. agencies, students are kept under surveillance, local media is gagged, laws are passed in which govt. employees are asked to refrain from criticizing the govt. policies. How would an apologist who believes that J&K is a part of democratic India describe it?

It's often been discussed that we should try to find the solution of Kashmir issue by peaceful means within the democratic framework of India.

Undoubtedly India is world's largest democracy on papers and procedure but on practical grounds, India does not qualify for a democracy.

How can you expect a nation to listen to you whose (so-called) democratically elected prime minister has been a chief architect of communal riots, where elections are fought on communal lines, where rapists and criminals are lawmakers, where media is controlled by the ruling regime, where every voice of descent and every critique is silenced either by death or by other means, where every critique of govt. is declared anti-national and the elections are won by populism and tricks, where government agencies are used to quell opposition and where minorities are facing existential threat, where every dissenting voice is threatened to be sent to Pakistan, where a Muslim is lynched in broad daylight for keeping beef in his fridge, where every skull cap-donning man & burka-clad women is a suspected terrorist, where students are sent to jail for protesting against government policies and where academicians and journalists are killed just because they speak or write against the government.

Hence, for Indian politicians, the number of deaths in Kashmir is just a vote gaining policy in India. The corpse of a Kashmiri is sold in election market to satisfy the collective conscience of a nation.

Soldiers take pride in raping women and shooting innocents, and Indian masses are indoctrinated with the narratives by jingoist media to such an extent that they actually support all this.

This is not restricted to Kashmir only, the situation in North East Indian states, Naxal areas and tribal regions in mainland India are no good than this. Rapes, killings, torture, and human rights violation by the Indian army is very common there too.

Democracy in Kashmir has always been used to fortify military occupation by taking refuge in black laws like AFSPA, DA & PSA while using local collaborators. And the irony is that these local pro occupational politicians since the times of Sheikh Abdullah have always been used as a cannon fodder to serve the interests of India and it's occupation, these henchmen are later on thrown after use just like tissue papers, if and ever they demanded or spoke for the rights of people.

The recent dumping of Pro Indian JKPDP by Its ally BJP without even informing the so-called Chief Minister is a case in point. That is a small but a significant display of democracy in Kashmir.

On the political front, the current govt like its predecessors is acting arrogantly and completely ignoring regional opposition voices just to saffronize every inch of India. This is intensifying the already present separatist and pro-freedom sentiments in the Indian mainland and occupied Kashmir respectively.

These aren't some fanciful or rhetorical claims; we have recently seen the calls for 'Dravidastan' and the revival of 'khalistan movement'.

The historically deep caste based fault line of India is also widening. With all these things going on, India is meant to explode and the resistance movement of Kashmir is going to the forerunner of this process.

The current regime in India is on a mission to distort and change the whole historical base of their country and while trying to do so they are taking up Kashmir issue albeit with their own biased fascistic political ideology.

But Kashmir issue has entirely different bases and historical context. It's often seen that on the one side people of Kashmir are being offered things to forget the historical and political reality of Kashmir and on the other, they are threatened by showcasing military might of India.

Terrorizing local population by daily CASOs, nocturnal arrests of youth, jailing every pro-freedom Voice, restricting every unarmed 'peaceful' protest by showering teargas and pellets on protesters is just a small display of actual 'idea of India' and it's democracy. 'Peace' in Kashmir is established only by caging the whole population in their homes by enforcing curfews and 'peaceful means of resistance' have always been welcome but with bullets, pellets and tear gases.

Every nation wants development, education and other things but not at the cost of their dignity and freedom. The people who are trying to sell sports and education against the history of Kashmir are living in fool's world.

World history is a witness to the fact that nations have been defeated in wars but they can never be made to forget their history. Even if all the armed resistance ends in Kashmir and there is no freedom movement at all, peoples one or other day will start a new movement and demand their right to freedom.

Movements and ideologies based on historical facts and justice are neither owned nor represented by specific persons of whatsoever stature. A person, no matter how big a leader he/she is just a part of a movement, not the movement itself.

If a leader decides to change his political stance and compromises on any basis, does that mean the movement is corrupt? Sheikh Abdullah was the most popular and tallest leader Kashmir ever had, but what makes his grave the 'most guarded grave' of the subcontinent.

Those who are trying to show us the corruption and illegitimacy of the movement by highlighting the individuals should ponder over this. A leader is only acceptable and legitimate for people until he/she stands by the real politico-historical narrative of Kashmir issue. Govt. can evolve their policies of oppression but they cannot go back in time and change the history. Therefore it would be better for the apologists of occupation to view us as humans who wish to live with dignity. But, they should always bear in mind that there is no dignity in living under occupation. We as oppressed human beings are duty bound to fight against every kind of injustice, tyranny, and oppression in our capacities and what could be the biggest injustice, tyranny or oppression else than living under occupation? The resistance offered by our people have frustrated the occupiers to such a level that they can't even tolerate the people who don't even subscribe to dominant narrative of local population and to set it an example they even jail or kill' human rights defenders' and 'ambassadors of peace' who otherwise never speak against occupation.

By bringing in religious discourse to castigate us and our motives is never going to ease the problems. Let us be clear about the fact that we believe that the religion we follow is a system of life rather than a set of rituals and prayers. Thus it is natural to derive one's thought, principle or ideology from the same system.

Second, it is not necessary for everyone to pick up the gun against oppression or occupation but it is a necessary obligation for everyone to rise against oppression, curse occupation and rise against every falsehood in whatever way one can do.

And thirdly, Islam and Slavery can never go hand in hand and Islam can never tolerate oppression on any human being. Fourthly, when the occupation is ugly, resistance can neither be beautiful nor can its means dictated or taught by the oppressor.

Resistance is resistance; it can neither be peaceful nor violent. In fact, violence is not that we have picked up the gun to fight occupation but violence is the presence of more than 12 lakh Indian armed men in Kashmir, violence is the presence of fortified army garrisons, bunkers and pickets, and occupation in itself is the biggest violence.

Therefore apologists of occupation should learn and understand the difference between 'violence' and 'self-defense'.

And lastly as a Muslims who believe that Islam is a complete system for mankind encompassing social, economic and political system, we too wish to be governed by the same, but it has never been implemented forcefully in whatsoever conditions.

Our mission is to liberate our land from foreign illegal occupation and thus to create an environment of peace and justice wherein every thought and ideology would be discussed and debated and people will be given their right to chose whatever they like.

And history has been witness to the fact, that where ever people live in real freedom and Islam was given a chance to rule, people have always not only welcome it but also seen the era of justice and peace in those time. And as Great revolutionary Malcolm X puts it; there is nothing in our book, The Quran that teaches us to suffer peacefully. Our religion teaches us to be intelligent.

Mannan Wani is a former Ph.D. scholar from Aligarh Muslim University, who joined the Hizbul Mujahideen, an armed outfit active in Jammu and Kashmir. He was killed by the Indian army on October 11 2018.

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